

Commission News



An Update to the Commissioners of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

Full Commission Meeting Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, MA - September 16, 2004

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT UNDERWAY

The Futures Committee is leading the charge on a "Sustainability Study" and reauthorization strategy. The Commission has recently contracted with the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute to undertake the study. The congressional delegation has fully supported legislation for the study and there are two Bills pending, S. 2646 and H. R. 5014. Also, the National Park Service Advisory Board is undertaking a study to evaluate the role the NPS plays in Heritage Areas and has requested that the Blackstone be the initial case study. The "kick off" meeting to introduce the planning team and the process will take place on September 16 as part of the Full Commission meeting and on September 29 at the Blackstone Historical Society's Hall, "Northgate," in Lincoln. The study will evaluate accomplishments, leverages (direct and indirect), effectiveness of management structure (including looking at a NPS designation), and further actions needed to accomplish the Corridor's goals. The report is scheduled to be completed by February. STAFF CONTACT - MICHAEL CREASEY.

RIVERS DAY



Explorer is ready to set sail from the new river access ramp at the Central Falls Landing.

On Saturday, June 19, 2004, the Blackstone River Valley celebrated Rivers Day with a Ribbon Cutting for the Central Falls Landing. On hand were the Blackstone River Coalition and its respective watershed organizations. Attendees celebrated the return of the river with water quality testing and a release of native trout into the river. The Blackstone Valley Explorer hosted free tours of the River up into the Lonsdale Marsh. The paddle club was represented and welcomed novices and experts alike to enjoy a paddle. STAFF CONTACT - BARBARA DIXON.

PRESERVE AMERICA



Mrs. Laura Bush and the Department of the Interior honored 24 communities along the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor June 25, 2004, when Assistant Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett announced the First Lady's designation of the Nation's newest Preserve America communities.

Preserve America is a new White House effort to encourage and support community efforts for the preservation and enjoyment of America's priceless cultural and natural heritage.

The celebrations began in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and made stops in Woonsocket, Rhode Island; Sutton, Massachusetts,

and; Worcester, Massachusetts through the day. A core group of Valley representatives traveled by double-decker bus through the communities, making presentations to key leaders and officials representing each of the 24 cities and towns.

Communities designated through the program receive national recognition for their efforts. Other benefits include use of the Preserve America logo on signs and promotional materials; notification to media, state tourism offices, and visitor bureaus; and listing in a Web-based directory to showcase preservation efforts and highlight heritage tourism destinations.

The Bush Administration's fiscal year 2005 budget contains a request for \$10 million in grant funds for which communities meeting the Preserve America criteria will be eligible to apply. These matching fund grants of \$50,000 to \$250,000 would go on a competitive basis to projects that preserve and use important historic resources for promotion of heritage tourism and other economic revitalization projects.

Assistant Secretary Scarlett said, "You are pioneers in this initiative, which shows just how proud the people of the Blackstone Valley are of their city, states, and their place in our Nation's history."

The Department of the Interior partners with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to administer the Preserve America Community program on behalf of the Office of the First Lady. Excerpted from the Preserve America Website. For more information on the program visit www.preserveamerica.gov. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

HASSANAMESITT WOODS

"Significant Land Transfer Takes Place – The Hassanamesitt Woods Joins the List of Public Lands in the Valley."



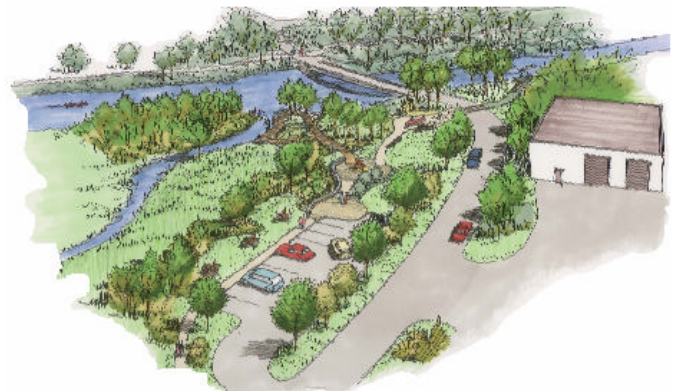
Grafton Land Trust receives funding for Cultural Landscape Study.

On Friday, September 10, 2004, the official transfer of property between the Trust for Public Land to the Town of Grafton with the able assistance of the Grafton Land Trust and the support

of the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council took place. As a part of the ceremony, Michael Creasey, Executive Director of the Corridor presented the Grafton Land Trust with a check for \$15,000 for a Cultural Landscape Study of the Hassanamesitt Woods property. This study will allow the full extent of the archaeology of the site to be uncovered as well as understanding the relationship of the human influences over time upon the natural landscape. The Cultural Landscape Study will document not only the fabric of the landscape and how the people who lived there interacted with the environment, but also provide the Town of Grafton with management guidelines for the appropriate use and treatment of the property. The Corridor Commission had approved a Hot Spot Grant to the Trust for Public Land for \$25,000 for the archeological study to determine the significance of the Hassanamesitt Woods in 2002-2003. The study found the site to be one of "the most significant Native American sites in New England today."

TRICENTENNIAL PARK

The Town of Sutton, Massachusetts turns 300 years old this year. Numerous events have been scheduled to celebrate the occasion ranging from art shows to musical concerts. However, the most anticipated project is the Town's legacy project, "Tricentennial Park."



Tricentennial Park is a 5-acre park along the banks of the Blackstone River near Singing Dam. The Town secured funds to design the Park through the Commission's Heritage Partnership Program. In addition, the Town has secured construction funds through the Massachusetts Highway Department's Transportation Enhancement Program.

The design effort started in early September and is at approximately 10%. Construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2005. The Park will include picnic tables, historic markers, interpretive signs, canoe portage, trail, public art and reflective area. STAFF CONTACT – MARK JEWELL.

RIVERWAYS

Dragon Boat Races

The Corridor Commission again was proud to sponsor the Chinese Dragon Boat Races in Pawtucket at the old state pier landing. This year there were 40 teams competing in the event. A team out of New York took this year's honors. The Corridor was also proud to sponsor the Corridor MissFits who had 18 all women participants. Hats off to Barbara Dixon for coordinating the event for the Corridor.

Greenway Challenge

On September 25, 2004, the fourth annual Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge returns with all the thrills, laughs, and friendly competition that make the Challenge one of the premier events in the Blackstone Valley. Over 500 participants are expected.

While the Greenway Challenge is recognized as a fun relay race, it celebrates and honors the hard work of thousands of people that have brought life back to the Blackstone River.

This year's course is new and course planners are busy mapping out race segments that will give participants a memorable experience. The Logistics Committee for the Challenge includes Captain Armand Morin, chair, Jim Amerault, Mary Anderson, Sue Andrews, Sue Barker, Barbara Dixon, Mark Jewell, Ray Lussier, Ken Rogers, Val Stegemoen, and Charlie Thompson.

The Greenway Challenge is hosted by the Corridor Keepers whose mission is to advocate for the continued preservation of the Blackstone Valley. The Keepers brings organizations together that share similar goals for the Blackstone Valley and helps them pool valuable resources to the benefit of the entire watershed. On the internet, information about the Challenge can be found at www.greenwaychallenge.org.

Blackstone River Coalition Is Working Hard for "Fishable/Swimmable by 2015" Campaign Goal



Key environmental agency partner meeting at River Bend Farm.

This past summer, the Blackstone River Coalition has been working extremely hard to set the platform for achieving its goal

of a "Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015." Members of the Coalition's "grassroots tier" have met periodically throughout the summer, assigned themselves to task forces, and created a detailed, color-coded Comprehensive Priority Matrix that summarizes their goals and actions for the next few years. Jan Reitsma, Consultant for the Blackstone River Coalition, has taken the lead for the "Interagency Tier" by coordinating and educating state and federal environmental agencies about the Coalition's Campaign. On July 21st, an important day-long meeting was held at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, MA for the staff of key environmental agencies such as RIDEM, MA DEP, and EPA. The event, sponsored by the Coalition, enabled all agencies to update one another about significant projects and discuss key issues that must be addressed in order to achieve our "Fishable/ Swimmable by 2015" Campaign goal. STAFF CONTACT - KAREN MATELESKA.

Bikeway Update

The Blackstone River Bikeway continues to make progress in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

In **Rhode Island**, the 2-mile segment north of Manville is now at 90% design, with an anticipated construction start time of November 2004. The segment from the Pratt Dam to the Lonsdale Marsh is nearly complete.



Bikeway bridge being constructed over the Pratt Dam.

The segment south of the Lonsdale Marsh is at 90% design with an anticipated construction start date of early 2005. The remaining segments north to the state line and south to Providence are all at approximately 10% design.

In **Massachusetts**, bikeway construction continues as part of the Rt. 20 contract within the I-90/Rt. 146 interchange project. The three mile segment in Uxbridge/Millville remains at 25% design with a public hearing anticipated in the spring of 2005. In addition, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce has retained VHB Inc. to conduct a feasibility study on the section of bikeway from the Northern Gateway Visitor Center south to Millbury St.

The Massachusetts Highway Department has developed an environmental permitting strategy for the entire Bikeway project. This will enable the project to move more smoothly through the permitting process.

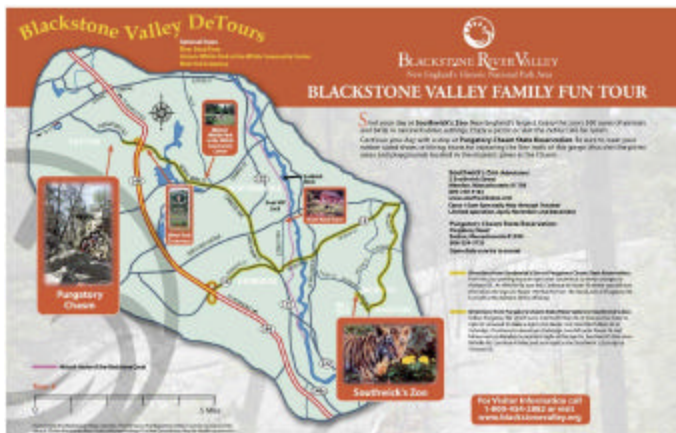
The Congressional delegation continues to work hard to secure additional funding to complete the Bikeway in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Specifically, Congressmen from both states are working to secure funds through the re-authorization of TEA-21 and other federal sources.

Due to the Martin St./Berkeley St. bridge replacement project the Bikeway is closed at this crossing. From the Front St. parking lot to the closure is approximately 2 miles, from the Kelly House it is approximately 0.5 miles.

Visit the Bikeway's new website www.blackstoneriverbikeway.com to learn the latest information. STAFF CONTACT – MARK JEWELL.

TOURISM

DeTours



Family Fun DeTour of the Blackstone River Valley

The Tourism Summit participants sent out a loud and clear message that the Blackstone River Valley needed to develop package tours. At Tourism Summit II, participants developed a beginning list of tours. To date, six themed tours have been produced in 11" x 17" tear sheets to be available at staffed visitor sites throughout the valley. A small fee is charged by the Tourism Council to commercial parties to offset production costs. Packages are intended to take a day and provide a diversity of fun options throughout the valley. Look for the upcoming Fall Foliage Tour and the Birding in the Valley Tours to be released this fall. A seasonal Holiday Tour will also follow. Anyone with any input or recommendations as to topics should contact Barbara Dixon who maintains a listing of available tours. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH OR BARBARA DIXON.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

Schedule for the 2004-2005 Class

Sessions for LBV will be held beginning in October 14 on the second Thursday of each month until May from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Topics include: the inspiring story behind the creation of the Heritage Corridor, the leader's role in a changing society, the citizen planner and economic growth, taking action: getting facts and getting organized, building stronger, healthier communities, and preserving the natural resources of the Valley. Tuition is \$800 and scholarships are available.

For an application and more information email Beckley Alley at balley@blackstonevalley.org or contact her at the Blackstone Valley Chamber Office at (508) 234-9090, ext 107. For online information on the program, please consult the Chamber's website at www.blackstonevalley.org. STAFF CONTACT – HALFORD WELCH.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Rangers are out and about interpreting the Valley

Paddle Club

The Blackstone Valley Paddle Club wrapped up another wonderful season of paddling in August. Once again, our dedicated volunteer team leaders played an invaluable role helping the Rangers successfully lead a total of thirty trips over fifteen weeks. Our partners at Great Canadian Canoe and Kayak and the Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association were also of great assistance to the success of the program. The club paddled some old favorite stretches, while also investigating some new ones, like Manchaug Pond in Sutton. Three introduction to paddling sessions were also offered to let those new to the sport learn the skills they need to enjoy an exploration of the wonderful waterways of the Blackstone River Valley. STAFF CONTACT – KEVIN KLYBERG.



Paddle Club out and about this summer.

Walkabout Tours Offer Valley Insights

The Rangers led another successful season of Thursday Night Walkabouts from June through August. The highlight of the season was when Ranger Jack Whittaker gave his final program, unveiling a brand new tour of New England Village in Grafton with almost one hundred people in attendance. This year's

series also saw tours in Harrisville and Chepachet to coincide with the official release of our new walking tour brochures of those villages. Stay tuned to see where the tours will be offered next summer.

Educators' Guide Webpage Revised and Launched

In August, the revised Educators' Guide was launched on the Corridor's webpage. Sorting out the offerings at 35 different organizations and agencies, this page provides programming and curriculum highlights for educators and others. The page can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/blac/educator>.

Along the Blackstone

"Uncovering the Hidden Blackstone Canal - Part II," Along the Blackstone Episode #60 is currently airing throughout the Region.

Part II of what will be a four-part series tracing the route of the Blackstone Canal as shown by the 1828 Phelps As-Built Map of the Canal as compared to what the landscape reveals about the canal today. The new show looks at how the canal helped shape the communities of Albion, Manville, Woonsocket, Blackstone and Millville as the canal headed north to Worcester. With the assistance of local historians Ray Bacon of the Museum of Work & Culture and Margaret Carroll of Millville, Rhode Island's State Preservation Historian, Rick Greenwood and Ranger Kevin Klyberg, continue with their lively discussion in trying to understand the changes to the landscape over 175 years ago. Ranger Chuck Arning continues to explore sections of the canal as they are re-discovered along the river banks of the Blackstone River.

Two episodes that are currently in production are: Show #61: "The Paddle Club and Teaching River Safety" and Show #62: "Following the Plow - the Farm to Factory Story in the Blackstone Valley." STAFF CONTACT - CHUCK ARNING.

VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS PROGRAM (VIP)

Volunteers Receive Recognition



Irene Blais in period costume speaking to children at the Slater Mill Historic Site.

Congratulations to VIP Irene Blais for being awarded volunteer of the month by the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island. Irene is being recognized for her outstanding volunteer service throughout the Blackstone Valley. She can be found volunteering at the Museum of Work & Culture, Slater Mill Historic Site, presenting the New Coat for Anna program and in the Depot assisting with special event coordination. In November the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island will announce the volunteer of the year award which will be chosen from one of the months' nominations, we wish Irene the best and we thank her for her countless hours of volunteer time.

A fond farewell and many thanks go to VIPs Pete and Rita LaBonne for years of volunteering. They have sold their home in Blackstone, MA and are preparing to move south. We are proud to announce that Rita has been selected to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award; this award is to recognize her contributions of volunteering over 4,000 hours throughout the Blackstone Valley. We wish Rita & Pete health and happiness on their new journey and we're sure they will find new volunteer opportunity when they settle in. "Imagine their Possibilities." STAFF CONTACT - SUZANNE BUCHANAN.

STAFF NOTES

Michael Creasey

At the September 1st Superintendent's Sub Cluster meeting held at the Brigham Hill Community Farm, Marie Rust, NPS Northeast Regional Director, surprised Michael Creasey by presenting him with a plaque honoring him as "Superintendent of the Year."

Ranger Whittaker's Retirement

More than 50 people filled the Brigham Hill barn on Friday, June 18 to bid Jack Whittaker the best in his retirement. The gathering offered colleagues, family, and friends a chance to recount favorite memories, and for Jack to get in the last word. Since then, Jack continues to stop by the office while in the neighborhood for regular visits to Doris King.

CALENDAR OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

September 16 - Executive Subcommittee Meeting followed by Full Commission Meeting - Worcester Historical Museum at 10:30 am.

September 18 - Heritage Homecoming Events begin - See brochure for specific dates, times and events.

September 25 - Greenway Challenge - Partnering with the Corridor Coalition from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact Barbara Dixon for more information.

September 29 - Sustainability Public Meeting - Northgate, Old Louisquisset Pike Lincoln RI beginning at 6:30 pm. From Rt. 146 South, take Rt. 246/Louisquisset Pike Exit. Turn right off ramp, Northgate immediately on right. From Rt. 146 North,

take Rt. 123 Breakneck Hill Road Exit. Turn left at end of ramp. At first light, turn right onto Rt. 246/ Louisquisset Pike. Northgate is about 1.5 miles on right.

October 2 and 3 – Waters Farm Days.

October 16 – Tricentinneal Park Sutton Groundbreaking – A fun-filled day with river related activities for the whole family.

November 12 Executive Subcommittee – 8:30 am
Commission Offices.

November 18 – Full Commission meeting – Location TBD

June 15 - 18, 2005 - Save the Date – Expedition 2005 is
Coming!